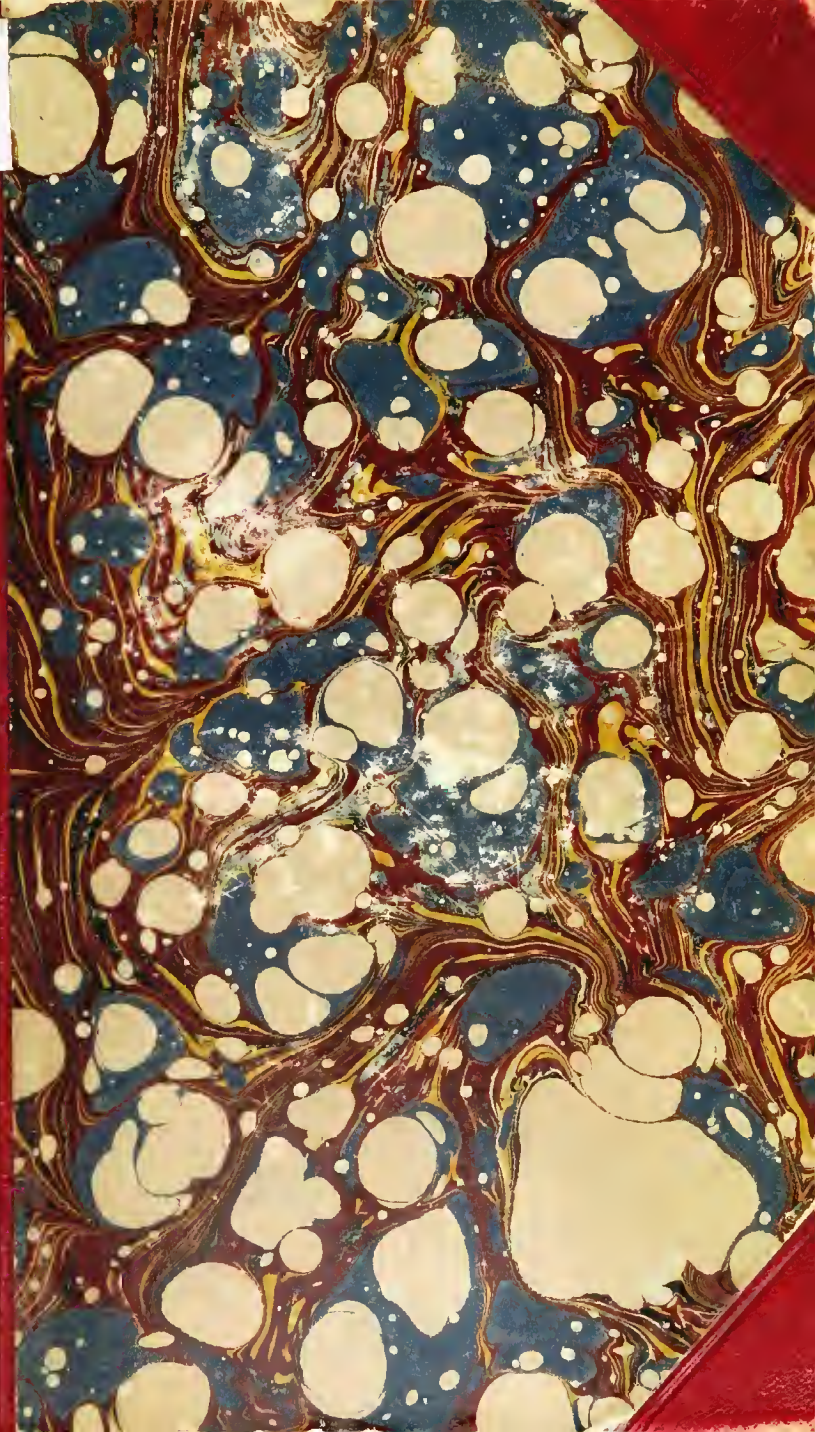


PA
4414
05A89



PA
4414
05 A 89

Cornell University Library

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME
FROM THE
SAGE ENDOWMENT FUND
THE GIFT OF
Henry W. Sage
1891

A.79175

6/3/95

DATE DUE

F 5 - '34

~~DEC 8 1959 M P~~

42 : '34

JI 28 '37

~~MAY 30 1964 M P~~

W - 2 '38

N 25 '39

~~NOV 4 1970 M P~~

MAR - 3 1947

Oct 23 '47

~~JAN 26 1978~~

~~MAY 10 1979 F 8'8~~

DEC 20 1950 4

~~OCT 10 1998~~

RR/s/sz

MAY 30 1952

~~DEC 6 1955 M P~~

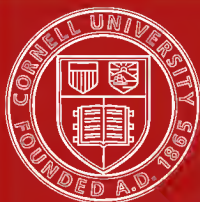
Cornell University Library
PA 4414.05A89

Oedipus at Colonus



3 1924 026 593 511

olin



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

OEDIPUS AT COLONUS

OEDIPUS AT COLONUS

CLOSELY TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF SOPHOCLES:

AN EXPERIMENT IN METRE

GOFFIN
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

BY

ARTHUR COMPTON AUCHMUTY

HULL

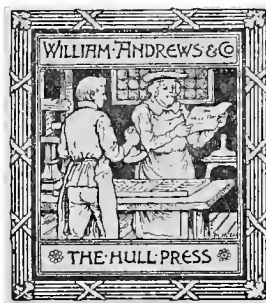
WILLIAM ANDREWS & CO., THE HULL PRESS

LONDON

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, HAMILTON, KENT, & CO., LTD.

1894

A.79175



ERRATUM.

Page 27, line 11, *for* one *read* me.

•

TO
PROFESSOR JEBB
WHOSE TEXT I HAVE FOLLOWED
AND TO WHOSE NOTES AND PROSE VERSION
I HAVE BEEN SO LARGELY INDEBTED.
A. C. A.

PROEM.

OEDIPUS, son of Laius, King of Thebes,—that an evil fortune predicted upon his birth might come to nought,—had been exposed in his infancy upon Mount Cithæron ; and, being found and rescued, had been brought up among strangers, in ignorance of his parentage. Come to man's estate, and having delivered Thebes from the calamity of the Sphinx,—Laius being now dead, slain on a journey by an unknown hand,—he was rewarded with the crown, together with the hand of the widowed queen in marriage. Two sons, Polyneices and Eteocles, and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene, were born to them. By and by it came to light who he was, that he had married his own mother, and that the man whom he had killed years ago in self-defence was his own father, Laius. In his first access of horror at this discovery, he had madly put out his eyes, and craved to be banished from the country. This Creon, the queen's brother, and the people had opposed. But later, when Oedipus had grown calmer and content to remain in Thebes in the seclusion of his own house, Creon, and his own sons, now grown up, thrust him out, lest his presence should bring trouble to the city. His daughter, Antigone, accompanied him. In the course of their wanderings they have now reached the hamlet of Colonus, at a short distance from Athens, and within the jurisdiction of Theseus, the king of that city.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

✓ OEDIPUS Late King of Thebes.

✓ THESEUS King of Athens.

✓ CREON Regent of Thebes.

✓ POLYNEICES Son to Oedipus.

✓ ANTIGONE } Daughters to Oedipus.

✓ ISMENE }

✓ STRANGER Native of Colonus.

✓ MESSENGER.

✓ CHORUS Elders of Colonus.

OEDIPUS AT COLONUS.

Enter OEDIPUS, and ANTIGONE, leading him.

- OED. Child of the blind old man, where are we now,
Antigone,—in what coasts, or what men's town?
Who to the wanderer Oedipus to-day
Will grant a niggard hospitality?
Little he craves, and, though that little still
Be scant'd in the getting, 'tis enough :
Content is learn'd of suffering, learn'd of Time's
Long escort, and, withal, of noble mind.
But, if thou seest, my child, a place for sitting,—
Be it common ground, or by some grove o' the gods,—
There let me pause and rest ; so we may learn
Where 't is we are, in plight to be instructed,
Strangers of denizens, and what heard perform.
- ANT. Father ! worn Oedipus ! the towers that guard
The city, by report of eyes, are far :
Sacred this place,—a sure surmise,—one burst

Of laurel, vine and olive, in whose depths
The nightingales, a feather'd crowd, sing sweet.
Here stoop thy limbs upon this rugged stone :
Thou hast push'd on a long stage for thy years.

OED. Ay, seat me, and be thou the blind man's guard.

ANT. If time should count, I have not this to learn.

OED. So : and canst tell me now what point we have gain'd ?

ANT. Athens I am sure of, but the neighbourhood—no.

OED. None on the road but had that much to say.

ANT. Should I go, then, somewhere, and learn what the place is ?

OED. Do so, my child,—so it be habitable.

ANT. Nay, it is inhabited. But, methinks, no need :

Yonder I see a man not far away.

OED. Say : drawing hitherward and on the move ?

ANT. Nay, but already with us.

Enter STRANGER of Colonus.

What thou findest

Timely for utterance, speak ; the man is here.

OED. Stranger, she tells me here, she, who for me

At once and self is eyes, how, pat, on the search

As to our doubts, thou hast drawn near, to inform us . . .

STR. Ere thou enlarge thy questioning, from this seat

Come off : thou art on ground no foot must tread.

OED. And that ground what ? reckon'd what deity's ?

- STR. Inviolatē and undwelt : the terrible Ones,
Daughters divine of Earth and Darkness, hold it.
- OED. Whose awful name should I call on, at thy mouth?
- STR. The Kindly Powers all-seeing the folk here
Would speak them : other names please elsewhere.
- OED. Now gracious to this suppliant be their welcome,
As I this land's repose will quit no more !
- STR. What import's here ?
- OED. The watchword of my fate.
- STR. Nay, then, for me, the state aside, 'twere bold
To move thee, ere reporting what I do.
- OED. Now, for Heav'n's love, sir, think not scorn to hearken
So poor a vagrant's suit, and deign reply.
- STR. Speak out : no scorner shalt thou find in me.
- OED. What is the place, then, where we have set our feet ?
- STR. All that I wot thou too shall hear and know.
This ground is consecrate throughout : its lord
Awful Poseidon, and with him the Titan
Prometheus, the fire-bringer ; where thou treadest,
The Brazen Threshold of this land is call'd,
The stay of Athens : for the fields at hand,—
Yon knight Colonus these, sir, with fond pride,
Claim for their great original ; and, when
They are named, all here, a common name, 'tis his.

Such are these parts ; thou hast it all ; not honour'd
In story, by home-nursed affection rather.

OED. There are, then, dwellers in the neighbourhood here ?

STR. Ay, truly ; name-inheritors of yon god.

OED. Under a prince ? or sways the popular voice ?

STR. The king who rules i' the city governs here.

OED. And he, this lord of voice and arm, is who ?

STR. Theseus his name,—Ægeus his sire before him.

OED. Could one of you go be his escort hither ?

STR. With what in view, to tell, or work his coming ?

OED. Great guerdon to be won by a small service.

STR. A man bereft of sight, what service his ?

OED. In all I speak, my speech shall be with vision.

STR. Mark, friend, and 'scape mischance : seeing thou art
To appearance noble, saving thine ill star.

Here bide, e'en where I found thee, while I seek
Those here o'th' spot,—not in the town,—the demesmen,
And tell them all : these shall decide for thee,
Whether thou may'st stay, or retrace thy steps.

Exit STRANGER.

OED. Child, has the stranger left us ?

ANT. Ay, father.

Wherefore thou art free to speak in quietude

Aught whatsoever, with no one by but me.

OED. Ye Queens of stern regard ! since at your seat,
Yours first within this land, I have bent me now,
To Phoebus and to me prove not ungracious :
Who to me, oracling those many ills,
This for a rest bespake, in time's long course,—
Goal in a land to reach, where I should find
Seat of the august goddesses, and a home
With friends, and there round off life's weary race :
Gain to my hosts, through that vouchsafed abode,—
Bane to my banishers, who drave me forth.
Whereof should come—this pledge he gave—a sign,
Earthquake, or, haply, thunder, or flash from Zeus.
So now I know indeed this journey's issue,
Wherein—no course but this—sure lead from you
Hath drawn me to this grove. Not else I had chanced
On you before all other in my travel,
Wine-wean'd upon wine-haters, and this dread floor,
Unhewn, ta'en seat on. But, O goddesses,
Second Apollo's voice, and grant, at last,
To have done with life, and pass, and make an end :
So as, mayhap, ye slight me not, being thrall
To toils perpetual, beyond mortal use.
Come, O sweet Daughters of old Darkness ! Come,
O thou surnamed of mighty Pallas ! thou,

City of Athens, with prime glory crown'd !
 Compassionate this poor wraith of Oedipus,—
 Wraith,—for, in sooth, his ancient self it is not.

ANT. No more : lo ! yonder on the way some people,
 Old men, inspectors of your resting-place.

OED. No more. But thou from the highway apart
 Conceal me in the grove, to learn, the while,
 What talk they will hold : to learn is to embrace
 Fit circumspection for the course before us.

The CHORUS, Elders of Colonus, enter the Orchestra.

CHO. *See ! who was it ? who ? where now lodged ?
 Where from this place hath he hurried, he of all folk,
 Of all folk, the audaciousest ?*

Make close search : spy out well :

Ay, probe deep ev'ry nook.

Some vagrant,

*Some vagrant is the old man, none
 these parts know, for he ne'er had, else,
 sure, the untrodden grove of these*

*Irresistible Maids approach'd,
 whom with a shudder name we,
 And with eyes averted pass, raise no
 voice, utter no word, but hush'd
 lips in reverent thought the while*

*Alone move:—but lo now (they say)
one whom no awe constraineth !
And I scan close, I, all the precinct round,
But I cannot as yet discern where lodged
I shall find him.*

OED. Lo the man whom ye seek ! sound of voice lends me eyes :
As in proverb we say.

CHO. O!—— O!——
Dread sight to the eye ! dread voice to the ear !

OED. Pray you, now, do not hold me for impious.

CHO. Heaven help ! who, what may the old man be ?

OED. Hardly, for Fate's choice, one to felicitate,
Sirs, who the land here rule in judgment.
Lo the proof ! not else thus were I with eyes
Alien crawling,
Or the strong thus anchor'd on weakness.

CHO. *Ah me ! were those orbs always dark ?
Brought with thee so from the womb ? Ah me ! a hard life,
Ay, life-long, hath been thine, meseems.
But ne'er, sure, help may I,
This curse new shalt thou add.
Too far, there !
Too far ! nay, but, or haply thou*

*plunge rash foot in yon voiceless dell's
 grassy glades, where the sacred bowl,
 Water-brimm'd, with the honied draughts
 pour'd in a stream combines,—this,
 Prithee, hapless stranger, heed well!—re-
 tire, get thee away! what ho!—
 wide the passage that sunders us :—
 Dost hear, wanderer trouble-tost?
 so thou hast aught to say, now,
 For discourse with me, quit the foot-fended ground.
 And, where all folk are free, there speak : till then
 Be forbearing.*

OED. Daughter, to what thought's point should we turn us?

ANT. In the folk's ways here, father, needs must we tread :
 Concede what is due, nor turn deaf ear.

OED. Give me thy hand, then.

ANT. I have : 'tis here. .

OED. Pray, now, let me suffer no wrong, sirs,
 Trusting you and leaving my refuge.

CHO. *Fear not, aged one, e'er
 forth from this seat, maugre thy will,
 any shall drive thee.*

OED. *Still on ?*

CHO. *Ay, advance yet further.*

OED. *Still?*

CHO. *Forward, O maiden, guide him,
Since thou understandest, thou.*

ANT. * * * *

OED. * *

ANT. * * * *

*Come away, come with me, father, where
thy dark steps I am piloting.*

OED. * * *

CHO. *Strange, poor soul, in the stranger's land,
Nerve thee now to abhor with her
What the city in her own heart of hearts
Hates, what she loves revering.*

OED. *Lead me there, then, my child,
Where, our feet planted safe in religion's pale,
We may say our say, and our ears may hear.
What must be, must: let it be, then.*

CHO. *Hold there! bend not thy step
further than that, passing yon slab
there in its rock-bed.*

OED. *Thus far?*

CHO. *'Tis enough: thou hearest.*

OED. *Now sit?*

CHO. *Ay, aside just moving,
Crouch low on the rough stone's edge.*

ANT. *Dear father, this is for me: come, joining,*

OED. *(Ah me! Ah me!)*

ANT. *now, quietly, step to step.*

*So: and now leaning thine aged frame
forward, thus, on my loving arm.*

OED. *Ah! soul-dark visitation!*

CHO. *Poor heart, now thou hast found some ease,
Speak, and tell us what man thou art,
In such pitiable distress led on?
Land of thy birth how name we?*

•

OED. *Outcast from my city, O sirs! but spare,*

CHO. *What deprecation's here, old man?*

OED. *Ah! spare who I am to ask, ah! spare
More inquisition, deeper searching.*

CHO. *Say'st thou?*

OED. *Birth horrible*

CHO. *Speak!*

OED. *Daughter, a-
las! what should this tongue say?*

CHO. *To what blood dost thou belong? tell us
plain, who was thy sire.*

OED. *Woe is me! how shall I do, my precious child?*

ANT. *Better tell, being thrust to the corner.*

OED. *Say't, then, I will: for no more it may be hid.*

CHO. *Pair of loiterers! nay, but make speed, thou.*

OED. *Know ye one Laius' son?*

CHO. *O horror! O!*

OED. *And the Labdacus family?*

CHO. *O Zeus!*

OED. *Wretch of an Oedipus?*

CHO. *What? and thou art he?*

OED. *Let no words that I utter dismay you.*

CHO. *O! O! O! O!*

OED. *Woe for me!*

CHO. *O! O!*

OED. *What is coming, my child? what awaits us?*

CHO. *Out! hence! march forth out of the country.*

OED. *And thy promises—~~how~~ wilt redeem them?*

CHO. *Surely to no man requital from Destiny*

Cometh for quittance of wrongs:

But deceit 'gainst deceit, now from there, now from here,

*In contention array'd, retribution of
grief not of grace bringeth home.*

*As for thee, from these seats get thee hence back a-
gain, from my land hie away*

*With alacrity, ere thou a deeper debt
Upon my city fasten.*

ANT. *Reverent-soul'd strangers, hear !
Since no tolerance ye to my sire,
Stricken in years, might accord, through deeds
Heard of done by him all unpurposed,—
Me, howsoe'er, I beseech you, commiserate,—
Me, wretched maid, strangers, who
Plead for my dear sire only and supplicate,—
Supplicate I, not with eyes that are visionless,
Looking in thine face to face, e'en as though I were
Born to life's light of your blood, that the sufferer
May find pity. On you, as a god, do we
Lean in our misery : hear yet, and graciously
Grant me the scarce look'd for boon.
Yea, I implore thee, by all that thou cherishest,
Child of thy love, wedded wife, treasure, deity !
Search through the world, thou shalt not find one,
Who, should a god have him in hand,
E'er escape could compass.*

- CHO. Nay, child of Oedipus, both thee and him,
Doubt not, we pity for ill-fortune's cause.
But how the gods may deem palsies the courage
Further to speak than what thou now hast heard.
- OED. I marvel, then, from glory or fair fame
Flowing to waste what profit doth ensue :
Seeing that Athens for godfearingness
Is lauded, and for potency to shield,
For means to aid, the stranger in distress,
Stands sole : what boot to me ? dislodged this floor
Is not enough, but ye must drive me hence,
Scared by a name, ay, by naught else, not me,
Not me, nor deeds of mine, seeing my deeds
Had in them more of sufferance than of act :
Might I but tell thee, what thou dread'st me for,
That story of my parents : this am I
Well sure of. But for native guilt, what proof ?
Wrong'd, to requite the wrong ! nay, were it done
Open-eyed, not e'en thus were guilt incurr'd.
But now i' the dark I went that way I went ;
Who wrong'd me in broad daylight sought my hurt.
Wherefore, before the gods I pray you, sirs,
As ye have raised the suppliant, so protect him :
Not fear the gods, and to those gods anon

Tender no due regard at all ; but think,
Their eyes are toward the godly in the earth,
Their eyes are toward the ungodly, nor
Ever unholy man escaped on earth.
Take them to friend, nor shroud the fair estate
Of Athens, thou, unholy deeds subserving :
But, as from sanctuary ye took me, pledged,
Save me and guard me through : nor on this face,
A sorry sight, I ween, look as in scorn.
Sacred I am here, devout to Heaven, and fraught
With blessing for this people. But, when he,
The lord, that is your governor, is come,
Then shalt thou be apprised of all : meanwhile,
In any wise run not to wickedness.

CHO. The thoughts thou hast raised, old man, awe and alarm
Must needs inspire, rehearsed not, they, in words
Of trivial scope. Howbeit, content am I
The princes of this land these things should judge.

OED. And where, friends, dwells the sovereign of this shire ?

CHO. In his sire's city, among us ; and the scout,
Who sent me hither, is gone to fetch him too.

OED. Suppose ye the blind man will win from him
Such notice, that himself will come in presence ?

CHO. Ay, in good sooth, when once he hath caught thy name.

OED. But who is there to bring him word of this ?

CHO. Full long the track ; and oft doth travellers' talk
Delight to gad : which hearing yonder he,
Take heart, will be with us ; for wide, old man,
Thy name hath ranged 'mong all : whence, e'en tho' loth
To quit his ease, thy news will quickly bring him.

OED. So, with fair hap for his own city come he !
And me !—the good man still is his own friend.

ANT. O heaven ! what shall I say ? what think, my father ?

OED. What is 't, Antigone, my child ?

ANT. I see
A woman drawing near us, on a colt
Of Ætna mounted : on her head, for sun,
A broad Thessalian hat enshrouds her face.
How should I say ?
Is it ? is't not ? or doth the mind play false ?
Ay,—and no, too : I know not what to say ;
Ah me !—
It is no other : yes, with bright aspect
She greets me as she comes, giving good sign
Ismene's form it is, none else but she.

OED. How say'st, my child ?

Thy child and my own sister
I see ; and thou anon by voice may'st hear.

Enter ISMENE.

ISM. Twin names, to these fond lips that sweetest rise,
Father and Sister ! hard 't has been to find you,
And hard anew to see you for distress.

OED. My child, art come ?

ISM. Poor father, sad to see !

OED. Child, thou art here ?

ISM. Not without cost of pains.

OED. Touch me, my girl.

ISM. My hands are on ye both.

OED. One sire—two sisters !

ISM. Ah ! the grievous life !

OED. Of her and me ?

ISM. Ay, and poor me, as well.

OED. Child, but what brought you ?

ISM. Care for thee, my father.

OED. A yearning heart ?

ISM. And self-entrusted news :

One servant, faithful only found, my escort.

OED. But where thy brothers, young men's work to hand ?

ISM. They are—where they are. Hard fares it with them now.

OED. O to perfection they on Egypt's rule

In disposition modell'd and life's ways !

For, over there, the men-folk, under roof,

Sit still and ply the shuttle, but their mates
The bread-winning without-doors still pursue.
So you, my children : those, by right should take
These pains, biding at home, keep house like girls :
And you twain, in their stead, this poor wight's ills
Take on your hands. She,—from the day she doff'd
Youth's nursery, and vigour of frame acquired,—
Was still, poor maid, my fellow-wanderer,
And second childhood's guide ; oft thro' wild wood
Roaming, unfed, barefooted, and oft-times
With rain-storm or sun's heat distress, outworn,—
Of home, and all that to home life belongs,
Forgetful, so her father sustenance find.
And thou, child, to thy father erst wouldst bring,
Slipping Cadmean note, each oracle,
Each response on this body, and for me stood'st,
When my exile was toward, faithful watch.
And now, with what relation new, Ismene,
Art come ? upon what mission roused from home ?
Not empty-handed com'st thou, that I know
Well, nor to me-ward without freight of dread.
ISM. For me, what I have borne to find thee, father,
How living, where sojourning, I will pass
Untouch'd, not minded twice to suffer pain,

First in the toil, and in the tale anew.

But round thy two ill-fated sons what woes

To-day are rife, herald of these I have come.

Fain were they in the old days that the throne

Bide Creon's, and the city take no stain ;

Gravely regarding the race-ruin of old,

Cleaving, how ruinous, to thy hapless house.

But now, some god behind and sin-dark soul,

In them, thrice hapless, wakes an evil strife,

At government to grasp and kingly sway.

And he of the young blood and lesser years

The elder-born Polyneices of the throne

Deprives, and hath his native land expell'd.

Who—so with us the public talk prevails,—

To hill-girt Argos goes exiled, there takes

New kinship to his side and armed friends :—

So, straight shall Argos the Cadmeans' land

Or proudly win, or lift *her* pride to Heaven !

Here, father, is no blank array of words,

But stubborn deeds : and where the gods will show

Their pity on thy woes I cannot learn.

OED. So then thou 'dst hope at last the gods would take

Some thought for me, to be one day deliver'd ?

ISM. Yea, father, I, from the late oracles.

OED. What oracles these? what is foretold, my child?

ISM. That thou by yonder folk shalt yet be sought,
In death and in life too, for welfare's sake.

OED. To whom should such as I well-being bring?

ISM. On thee, 't is said, they find their power depend.

OED. So, when no more I am, I am then a man?

ISM. For the gods crush'd thee erst, but now uprear.

OED. Small count to rear in age who young was fell'd.

ISM. Know, howsoe'er, that Creon, for this cause,
Comes here anon, no myriad period hence.

OED. For what, my daughter? be my interpreter.

ISM. Nigh Theban land they 'ld plant thee, in their power
To be, but in its bounds to set no foot.

OED. But what the benefit, laid beyond the gates?

ISM. To them thy tomb ill-faring proves a grief.

OED. 'Might fathom that by wit without a god.

ISM. Therefore, observe, they would attach thee near
Their land, not where thou'lt be lord of thyself.

OED. Say: will they shroud me too in Theban dust?

ISM. Nay, father: by that blood of kin thou art barr'd.

OED. Then never, never, shall they be lords of me.

ISM. Woe, then, for the Cadmeans by and by!

OED. In what emergent issue, O my child?

ISM. Beneath thy wrath, when at thy tomb they stand

OED. Child, what thou tellest, from whose lips dost thou say it?

ISM. The men's, our envoys', from the Delphic hearth.

OED. And this on me 't is true Apollo spake?

ISM. So they affirm who have arrived at Thebes.

OED. My sons,—did ever one of them hear this?

ISM. Both one and other, and they know it well.

OED. And this the abjects heard, yet felt for me
No yearning, but prized more the sovereign power?

ISM. I brook to hear this, though it grieves me sore.

OED. Now may the gods their strife predestinate
Quench not, but to my hands commit their cause,
The arbitrement and issue of this fray,
Now toward between them, lance to lance in rest !
So, nor he now who holds sceptre and throne
Should bide, nor he that is gone forth return
Home any more ; me, from whose loins they sprang,
Thus from dear land being thrust with ignomy,
Who stay'd not, nor stood by ; but homeless made
Saw me sent forth, and heard proclaim my doom.
Haply thou 'ldst urge, my will then that way prone,
The state in fairness did vouchsafe the boon.
Not so ; nay, for, while yet 't was call'd to-day,
And passion in me seethed, and sweetest seem'd
Death, to be stoned with stones, and die the death

Was none found this heart's lust to gratify :
But afterward, when all the smart was eased,
And sense awoke of passion broke from bond
In scourging over-much the sins gone by,
Then must they choose, then from her bounds the state
Late force me after all ; and those, who might,
Their father's own, have stood their father's friends,
Would not, but left me, all for a slight word,
Outcast to roam in beggary evermore.
From these, these girls, what scope their nature yields,
Life-nurture and safe foothold on the earth
Are mine, and serviceableness of kith and kin ;
Their brethren still o'er him who gave them life
Kingdoms and thrones and sceptred sway preferring.
Yet win me shall they never for ally ;
Nor good to them from this Cadmean rule
Fall ever ; this I know, whenas I list
Her oracles new, and those self-hoarded old
Muse, by Apollo in his own time fulfill'd.
Wherefore, to seek me out, e'en let them send
Creon, or who besides in Thebes is strong.
For, strangers, so ye will—with the dread Powers,
In whose hands is this people, to your champions,—
Be stout to aid, this city shall ye dower

With a great saviour, and my foes with grief.

CHO. Full worthy of pity art thou, Oedipus,
Thou, and these maids ; and, to this plea whereas ,
Thyself this land's deliverer thou conjoin'st,
Fain am I to advise thee for thy good.

OED. Friend, a friend's charge will I perform at full.

CHO. Make now atonement to these Powers, to whom
Thou hast come first, and trampled their domain.

OED. After what manner ? school me, gentle sirs.

CHO. First, from perennial spring must thou procure
Sacred drink-offerings, lending hallow'd hands.

OED. And when this virgin draught I have obtain'd ?

CHO. Bowls are there, cunning work of master hand.
The brims of these and lips' twin handles crown.

OED. With leafage, or with woollen,—or what wise ?

CHO. Lock from a ewe lamb's fleece take thou, new-shorn.

OED. So : to what consummation must I then ?

CHO. Pour thy drink-offerings, facing the young dawn.

OED. Say : with these crocks thou spakest of should I pour them ?

CHO. Ay, in three streams, the last one to the drains.

OED. With what fill, and set, this ? one lesson more.

CHO. The fount's, the bee's, supply : but add no wine.

OED. And, when the leaf-gloom'd earth hath gotten these ?

CHO. 'Then, on her bosom, from both hands, thrice nine,

Lay olive sprays, and thereon pray this prayer.

OED. What this is I would hear ; it most imports.

CHO. Invoked the Kindly Ones, with kindly heart

That they receive their suppliant savingly.

So pray, thou, or what other in thy room.

Speak to no ear, and send abroad no cry :

Then move away, and turn not. This do thou ;

And boldly will I stand thine advocate.

Else, stranger, would I fear in thy regard.

OED. Children, attend ye what these neighbours say ?

ANT. We have heard, and wait thy bidding what to do.

OED. Not mine this errand, who through lack of strength

Come short and lack of sight, a brace of ills.

Go one of you, and carry out these things.

One soul, methinks, this debt should full discharge,

One for ten thousand, coming well-disposed.

Make haste, be doing, then ; but me alone

Leave not, for impotent were I to stir,

Abandon'd to myself and without guide.

ISM. Go I, then, to this office. But the place,—

Where that I am to find, I fain would learn.

CHO. Behind this grove, lady ; and, if of aught

Thou lackest, there is a neighbour will direct thee.

ISM. So to my part. But, thou, Antigone, here,

Guard this our father ; for in parents' cause
Who laboureth, yet of labour must not reck.

Exit ISMENE.

CHO. *Grim work, stranger, I wot,
laid to its rest evil so long
now to awaken :*

Yet fain would I hear related

OED. *What now ? what ?*

CHO. *Thy hard case, pitiful, proven cureless,—
The sorrow, the stress, the conflict.*

OED. *Ah sir ! as thou heed'st the stranger,
That shame of my wrongs unweil not.*

CHO. *The tale is abroad, no wise abating ;
That crave I only to hear aright told.*

OED. *Ah me !*

CHO. *Yield now, I beseech thee.*

OED. *Woe ! woe !*

CHO. *Grant mine, thou, even as I did all thy wish.*

OED. *Hear what evil, then, sirs,
I have been through, not of free will,
God be my witness !
Self-choice had none of my actions.*

CHO. *Where points this ?*

OED. *Nay, nought wist I, when, in evil wedlock,
The state to a bride-curse bound me.*

CHO. *True, she—as I hear—who bare thee,
To infamy brought thy bride-bed?*

OED. *Woe's me! very death is it to hear this.*

Ay, these two maids, sir, of me begot, two

CHO. *How say'st?*

OED. *daughters, yet two curses,*

CHO. *(O Zeus!)*

OED. *One womb, one mother, both theirs and mine, sprang from.*

CHO. *Thine offspring at the same time, then, and*

OED. *Ay,*

sisters of their own father, they.

CHO. *O horror!*

OED. *Yea, horror! backward
wheel my troubles, troop on troop.*

CHO. *Thou hast borne*

OED. *I have borne what leaves a scar.*

CHO. *Hast done*

OED. *Not done at all, but*

CHO. *How then?*

OED. *a gift received:*

Gift, that I would I had ne'er—ah! 't is heart-breaking!—

Been dower'd withal at the city's hands for service.

CHO. *O wretched! but and thou shedd'st the blood*

OED. *What*

now? What hast thou a mind to learn?

CHO. *A father's?*

OED. *O! there again thou*

stabb'st me, adding fresh wound to wound.

CHO. *Thou hast slain*

OED. *I have slain,—yet something have*

CHO. *What's this?*

OED. *to plead in justice.*

CHO. *How so?*

OED. *This tongue shall say:*

I at their hands whom I slew should have perished;

And innocent-ignorant have I come to this, sir.

CHO. Lo! on thy call, the king, of Aegeus' loins,
Theseus, is here, for that he was summon'd for.

Enter THESEUS.

THE. Hearing from many lips both in past days
Talk of that bloody work of ruin'd eyes,
I knew thee, son of Laius, and now
News on the road here doth the more assure.
Alike apparel and that piteous head
Approve thee very Oedipus; for whom,

Ill-starr'd, compassion moves me ask what suit
Thou'rt here, to Athens and to me preferring,—
Thou and thine handmaid evil-starr'd with thee.
Learn me : for dire, indeed, that fortune were,
'Thou shouldst rehearse, and I to stand aloof :
Knowing how I was rear'd a stranger too,
Even as thyself, and in the stranger's land
Wrestled for life and death, as no man yet.
So on no stranger would I turn my back,
Like thee to-day, but help to bring him through ;
Seeing I know ^{me} ~~one~~ man, to whom no more
Share in the morrow than to thee belongs.

OED. Theseus, thy generous instinct, without length
Of words, hath left me need to speak but little.
My name, my father's name, and what the land
I come from, thou thyself hast said aright.
Wherefore to me remains nought else but this,
To tell my suit, and our discourse is sped.

THE. Ay, that declare thou now, that I may learn it.

OED. I come, my own poor body to bequeath
In gift to thee, not grand to view, but yet
Better the gain therefrom than goodly shape.

THE. And what, in way of gain, dost claim to bring ?

OED. When time comes, thou shalt learn ; not now, just now.

- THE. What time? when shall thy proffer be disclosed?
- OED. When I am dead, and thou my burier.
- THE. Thy prayer is for life's close: but all between,
Or thou forgett'st, or mak'st of none account.
- OED. Nay: herewithal I garner that as well.
- THE. Small reach, then, hath this boon thou crav'st of me.
- OED. Yet mark! not little, no, the issue here.
- THE. What? mean'st thou as between thy sons and me?
- OED. Their wish, O King, is to convey me yonder.
- THE. An thou wilt too, nor thee exile beseems.
- OED. No, no; when I was willing, they refused.
- THE. Fond man! yet heat suits not adversity.
- OED. First hear my tale, then chide; for now, let be.
- THE. Proceed, I must not without book pronounce.
- OED. I have suffer'd, Theseus, cruel woes on woes.
- THE. Wilt thou that old mischance of race recount?
- OED. Ah no; for, Hellas through, all prate of that.
- THE. What is thy malady, then, past mortal use?
- OED. Thus is 't with me; to have suffer'd banishment
By them of mine own seed; and my doom is,
Home to return no more, a father slain.
- THE. What sense to fetch thee, then, and live apart?
- OED. The voice divine will prove their strong constraint.
- THE. Through fear, from warnings had, of what mishap?

OED. That needs must they be smitten in this land.

THE. And whence 'tween them and me should come bad blood?

OED. Dear son of Aegeus, to the gods alone

Befals not ever to grow old or die ;

But all things else almighty Time confounds.

Earth languisheth, and the corporeal frame :

Faith dies, and faithlessness breaks forth and buds ;

And never the same spirit constant still

'Twixt friend and friend, city and city, bides ;

But, now for these, now those, or rathe or late,

Their honey turns to gall, then friends again.

And, though in Thebes to-day, 'twixt her and thee,

Full summer reigns, Time, in his myriad march,

A myriad nights and days engendereth ;

Wherein the present concord of right hands

Their spears, on some slight plea, shall toss to the winds :

When, slumbering in the grave's seclusion cold,

Their warm blood by and by my corse shall drink ;

Be Zeus still Zeus, and his Apollo true.

But joys not to speak words should be let rest :

So leave me there, where I began : thou only

Keep faith, and Oedipus thou ne'er shalt say

That for a dweller here thou hast entertain'd

Profitless, so the gods not play me false.

CHO. Sire, from the first these and like words for us
This man hath shown good purpose to fulfil.

THE. Who, then, his proffer of good-will would spurn,—
A man's, to whom, first, the hearth of an ally
With us in mutual wont always belongs :
Who comes, beside, a suppliant of the gods,
And no small tribute pays this land and me ?
In awe whereof, never will I his grace
Cast out, but plant him citizen in the land.
And, list the stranger to stay here, be 't thine
To guard him ; or, to fare with me, if that
Like thee, may'st take thine own choice, Oedipus,
Which course thou wilt : my will shall go along.

OED. O Zeus, with men after this sort deal well.

THE. What is thy wish ? say ; to come home to me ?

OED. If I but might so : but the place is here,

THE. Wherein thou wilt do what ? I will not thwart thee.

OED. Where I shall master those who drave me forth.

THE. Large boon thou 'ldst speak of from thy company.

OED. So hold me thou thy word, and bring 't to pass.

THE. Have confidence here ; not mine to give thee over.

OED. I will not bind thee under oath, as knave.

THE. Nay, thou shouldst win no more than from my word.

OED. How wilt thou do, then ?

- THE. What is it thou fearest?
OED. There will come men
THE. These here will see to that.
OED. Beware lest, quitting me,
THE. School me not my part.
OED. Needs must, who fears.
THE. In my heart is no fear.
OED. Know'st not the threats,
THE. Know I that from this spot
No man shall bear thee off in my despite.
Full many a Threat full many an empty word
Will threaten in heat ; but, Reason home return'd
Self-master, lo, farewell the threaten'd deeds !
And those, mayhap, wax'd bold to speak stout things
About thy carrying off, I wot, shall find
Wide the sea thither and innavigable.
Wherefore, my mind aside, to a brave heart
Commend thee I, since Phoebus marshals thee.
Howbeit, I am sure, though I be not to hand,
My name shall guard thee that thou take no harm.

Exit THESEUS.

✓

- CHO. *Stranger, lo! in this steed-renown'd
land arrived, thou hast found earth's dearest shelter :
Our white-gleaming Colonus, where*

*she, the clear-throated, trills her plaint,—
The sweet nightingale,—haunts she most
here, deep-buried in green glades.
The dark wine-colour'd ivy hers,
hers the god's unapproached bower,
Myriad in fruitage and berry, un-sun-
lighted, un-wind-disturb'd when storm blasts
Rage all round, where the lord of wine,
lord of mirth, Dionysus, rangeth still, 'mong
Th' young goddesses once who nursed him.*

*Here, too, fed with the dew of heav'n,
lo ! his cluster of pride each morn Narcissus
Puts forth, he, from of old who crowns
those great goddesses twain ; and fresh
The ray'd gold of the crocus blooms :
nor th' unslumbering fountains
Of wide-roaming Cephissus fail ,
nay, but day unto day he flows,
Quick-breeding, over the levels meand-
ering with unpolluted outpour :
Swells deep-bosom'd the land ; nor un-
loved is she by the Muses' quire, unloved not
By golden-rein'd Aphrodite.*

.

And there is, what on far

Asian soil

hear I no tale of :

No, nor ever as yet

sprung on the great Dorian strand,

island of Pelops :

A plant no hand marreth, self-renewing ,

To the foeman's arms a terror still ,

Which here in our land supremely bloometh :—

Gray-leaf'd olive, the boon rearer of children.

The same shall none, whether in youth, or long time

Grown old, ever uplift

hand to destroy ,

nay, for the still-seeing orb of Zeus

Marks it, Morian Zeus, and those

Grand gray eyes of Athene.

New praise have I for yon

city, our own

mother, to tell thee,

Passing, gift by the great

godhead bestow'd, yea, and the land's

crown of her glories ;

Her pride of steeds, pride of colts, her sea pride.

O Kronos' son, to thee she owes

*This glory-seat, thee, our lord Poseidon !
Curb, that tameth the wild spirit of horses,
Who here in these highways first createdst !
Oar's blade too, to the hand
fitted so trim,
wondrously over the salt sea wave
Boundeth . flashing a hundred feet,
Nereus' daughters are leading.*

ANT. O land above all lands with praises blest,
Now let these bright words their full lustre show.

OED. What hap, my child ? what fresh ?

ANT. Father, here comes
Creon upon us, and with company.

OED. Good friends, and reverend sirs, at your hands now
Might I the bourn of my salvation see !

CHO. Fear not ; 't shall be : for though an old man I,
This country's strength hath not to dotage turn'd.

Enter CREON.

CRE. Sirs, of this land high-born inhabitants !
Some shock ye have—I see it in your eyes—
Of apprehension ta'en at my approach.
But shrink not from me, nor let loose ill word :
For with no violent purpose am I come ;
Seeing I am old, and know well I have reach'd

A city, if any in Hellas, of great strength.
Nay : but to urge this man have I been sent,
At these my years, to come with me to Thebes ;
Not on one man's despatch, but from the town
In general charge, because to me, by kin,
Of the city most it falls to mourn his woes.
But hear me thou, O Oedipus sorely tried !
And come thou home : all the Cadmean folk
Invites thee, and by rightful claim, I chief,
As chiefly, else were I of human kind
Basest, for thy misfortunes grieved, old man :
Seeing thee so wretched, far from home, and, worse.
A wanderer still, and, but one handmaid, one,
To look to, tramping destitute ; who, alas !
I had not dream'd would ever fall so low,
Such usage find, as fall'n she has, poor girl !
Ever for thee and that sad face of thine
Concern'd,—a beggar's life,—for wedlock ripe,
Not wedded, but the first chance comer's prey.
Is it a harsh reproach—ah ! woe is me !—
I have cast on thee, myself and all the house ?
Yet what the world sees who can hide ? Do thou
Hear me, then, Oedipus, urging thy fathers' gods,
And hide it with consent to come to Thebes,

Thy fathers' home ; wishing this city well,
Who merits it ; but she at home more claims
Duteous regard, being thy nurse of old.

OED. O balk'd at nothing ! no just argument
Disdaining, to fetch thence a shifty scheme !
What baits are these, that yet again thou 'ldst fain
Snare me, where to be snared would sorest gall ?
Aforetime, when, with those home-gender'd ills
Distraught, I hail'd a joy in banishment,
Grace that I would be done thou wouldst not do.
But when, at last, I had supp'd my fill of passion,
And household ways had proved, and found them sweet,
Then would'st evict, expatriate : nor came near
Thy heart in any wise this kinship then.
And now too, seeing this city and all her kin
With me in kind confederacy, thou aim'st
To warp me thence, soft wording a hard mind.
Yet what delight the unwilling to befriend ?
As one should list thy passionate prayers for help,
And give thee nothing and refuse his aid ;
But, seeing thy soul of her desire fulfill'd,
Grow bounteous then, when grace no grace might bring.
Were not a mock of satisfaction here ?
Howbeit, the like dost thou, like proffers making

To me, in language fair, in action base.

These too shall hear how I will prove thee base.

Thou art come to fetch me,—not to fetch me home,

But plant me a by-dweller ; so thy city

May pass unscathed of evil from this land.

Not that thy lot, this rather, to have there

My Curse, a country's curse, indwelling still.

And for my sons, their heritage is this,

Room in my land whereon to die,—no more.

Dives not my wit in Thebes more deep than thine ?

Yea, far, as my informants are more sure,

Phoebus, and Zeus himself, Apollo's sire.

And here thou hast brought thy tongue's sharp edge suborn'd,

And temper'd to the proof ; yet from thy talk

More sorrow than salvation like to win.

But, for I know thou heed'st me not, begone !

Here let us live in peace : for happy enow,

E'en as we are, were life—and joy thereof.

CRE. Whether dost think, that me, or thine own self,

Thy haviour hurts the more, in this discourse ?

OED. Full pleased am I, if powerless to persuade

Thou prov'st, even as myself, my neighbours here,

CRE. Poor wretch ! wilt blaze thee, spite thy years, of wit

Unchilded yet, a living slur on age ?

OED. Smart of thy tongue ! but, for my part, I know
No honest man to glose well every theme.

CRE. 'Tis one thing to speak much, to the point another.

OED. Thy words, no doubt, are few, but those in point.

CRE. No, sooth ; for one, at least, like thee for sense.

OED. Go : and I say it for these as well ; nor lurk,
To spy on mine appointed harbourage here.

CRE. To these I appeal, not thee : but, for the way
Thou answerest thy friends, if e'er I take thee,

OED. And who, in the teeth of these allies, shall take me ?

CRE. Wilt learn, I warrant, how grief tastes, without that.

OED. I muse what deed thou hast got to back that threat.

CRE. One of thy two girls have I seized but now,—
Despatch'd,—and will bear off the other straight.

OED. Woe's me !

CRE. 'T will make thy 'woe's me' louder soon.

OED. Hast got my child ?

CRE. And shall have this ere long.

OED. Ah ! friends ! what will ye do ? will ye give me up ?
Not drive out of this land the godless wretch ?

CHO. Out, sirrah ! hence, and quickly ! Both are wrong,—
Thy present doing, and what thou hast wrought before.

CRE. You,—you might do it now,—remove the girl ;
If with consent she will go not, then without.

ANT. Woe's me ! alas ! where shall I fly ? where find
Succour of gods or men ?

CHO. What doest thou, sir ?

CRE. I will not touch him, only her, who is mine.

OED. O lords of the land !

CHO. Stranger, thou doest not right.

CRE. 'T is right.

CHO. In what way right ?

CRE. I take mine own.

OED. *Give ear, O state !*

CHO. *What work 's this, sir ? come ! let
go ! soon wilt bring it
to the test of blows.*

CRE. *Stand off.*

CHO. *Not from thee, with
a design like this.*

CRE. Harm me a whit, thou 'lt have the state to fight.

OED. Did not I say as much ?

CHO. Unhand the girl,
And lose no time.

CRE. Command where thou art master.

CHO. Loose hold, I bid thee.

CRE. And I bid *thee*,—march on.

CHO. *Come on ! here ! come on, sirs !*

come, neighbours, come !

The city bleeds ; my own ci-

ty succumbs to force.

Ho ! this way, to me !

ANT. I am dragg'd away,—ah me !—O friends ! O friends !

OED. Where art thou, child ?

ANT. They are forcing me along.

OED. Reach out, my dear, thy hands.

ANT. Nay, I am powerless.

CRE. Off with her, you.

OED. O misery, misery !

CRE. So those two crutches will no longer serve

Your pilgrim steps. Nay, an thou wilt outface

Thy country and thy friends, whose mandate I,

Albeit a prince, here execute,—be it so.

One day, believe me, thou wilt see these things ;

How to thyself thyself dost no good now,

As none before thou wrought'st, through scorn of friends,

And wrath indulged, wrath at all times thy bane.

CHO. Stop where thou art, my friend.

CRE. Hands off, I say.

CHO. No : without them I will not let thee go.

CRE. A larger pledge, then, wilt thou find the state

Anon : I shall secure more than these two.

CHO. Thy next move—ha ?

CRE. Take *him*, and bear him off.

CHO. A doughty word !

CRE. And presently a deed.

CHO. Unless the sovereign of this land prevent.

OED. Unreverent tongue ! what ? wilt lay hands on me ?

CRE. Hold me thy peace !

OED. Nay, spare me voice, ye Powers

Here present, to pronounce this one curse more.

Villain ! whose violent hands my helpless darling,

Mine eye, those first ones gone, have reft me hence !—

For this to thee and thine may the great god,

Helios, who seeth all things, one day grant

To know a life of old age like to mine !

CRE. See ye these things, ye denizens of this land ?

OED. They see us both, and see this difference,—

Mine injuries deeds, my poor reprisal words.

CRE. I'll not restrain my rage, but force him off,

Stiffen'd with years and single-handed yet.

OED. *Ah ! woe is me !*

CHO. *A bold heart, sir, thou hast*

brought here, to think thou

shalt accomplish this !

CRE. *I do.*

CHO. *Then I'll call A-*
thens a state no more.

CRE. Right on his side, the little beats the strong.

OED. Hear ye his talk ?

CHO. Talk without issue, though ;
And that Zeus knows.

CRE. Zeus haply knows, not thou.

CHO. Flat outrage !

CRE. To be borne with all the same,

CHO. *What ho ! commons all ! what*
ho ! ye, our chiefs !
Come away, come with speed ! come
away ! lo ! they'll pass
The pass yonder soon.

Re-enter THESEUS.

THE. Why this shouting ? What's the matter ? What the fear hath
made you now

Interrupt me sacrificing at the sea-god's altar here,—

His, the lord of your Colonus ?—Tell me, let me know it all,

This, which brings me hurrying hither nimblier than my feet
enjoy ?

OED. Ah, friend ! 't is thou : I knew thy voice again.

I have had foul treatment from this man e'en now.

THE. In what particular? who hath harm'd thee? say.

OED. Creon,—thou seest him,—here, hath ravish'd hence
My children, ah! my one, my only pair.

THE. How say'st thou?

OED. What I have suffer'd thou hast heard.

THE. Come, make all haste, one of my men, and go
To yonder altars, and constrain the folk,
Horsed, unhorsed, all, to leave the offerings,
And dash loose-rein'd toward the neighbourhood where
Two opening roads that travellers use converge;
Lest the girls pass, and I be made a mock
Unto this stranger, worsted force perforce.
Off, as I bid, with speed. For the fellow here,
Went but my wrath with his deserts along,
I would not let him from my hands skin-whole.
But now, with the same law he hath come in court,
This and none other shall himself be ruled.
Ne'er from this land thou stirr'st, till thou have brought
Those maids, and set them bodily here before me.
Thou hast done a deed, derogatory alike
To me and thine own house and thine own land;
Set foot within a state, of upright dealing,
And strict legality, and, flouting yet

Her just authority, burst on us like this,
Prisoner and prize snatching perforce at will
Mine was some man-stript city or town of slaves
In thy regard, I a mere cipher's worth !
Yet 't was not Thebes whose training made thee bad.
'T is not her wont to rear unrighteous men.
Nor with approval would she learn thy deeds
Of rapine upon me, and on the gods,
In ravishing poor things from suppliance.
I would not, I, and standing on thy land,—
No, though I had the rightfullest of all claims,—
Without the lord o' the land, be who he might,
Hale folk and harry them, but should know what way
Strangers 'mong residents must behave themselves.
Thou shamest a city that deserves it not,
Thine own, by thine own act ; and gathering years
Bring thee at once old age and witlessness.
So, as I said before, I charge thee now,
To have the maids brought hither with all speed ;
Except thou carest to make thy home with us,
Not of choice but constraint. And this, be sure,
I mean, nor word it only off the tongue.

CHO. Seest, sir, what thou art come to? Place and race
Proclaim the honest 'man,—proof, the ill-doer.

- CRE. Not for I deem'd this state void, or of men,
Or counsel, son of Aegeus,—as thou say'st,—
Have I fulfill'd this task ; but judging, rather,
That ne'er for kin of mine they would be so seized
With zeal, to foster them in my despite.
Nor would they, I was sure, harbour a man,
Parricide, a man pollute, in marriage bonds
Unholy—bride with offspring—found involved.
Such a land-treasure theirs, was none more ware,
In Ares' council hill, which suffereth not
Such vagabonds with this state to dwell along.
And in that faith did I attempt this prey.
Nor therein had engaged, had he yet forborne
To hail hot curses on my race and me.
I claim'd a right to meet such treatment so.
For Wrath hath no old age, none other, only
Death : on the dead no trouble doth take hold.
Counter, thou 'lt act as seems thee good ; since me
Defect of fellowship, how just soe'er
My pleading, dwarfs : but counter, yet, those acts,
Old as I am, will I essay to oppose.
- OED. Soul to shame dead ! whom ween'st thou to upbraid ?
Me, at these years, or thine own self, herein ?
Murder and marriage and misfortuned life

Thou hast blurted on mine head ; which, to my sorrow,
I had no choice but bear : it pleased Heaven so :
Wroth, peradventure, with the race of old.
Since, for my single self, thou shalt find nothing
Of sin's reproach on me, that, for amends,
'Thus 'gainst myself and mine I did sin on.
Or tell me : if some god's doom o'er my sire,
Oracular, loom'd, that he, by his child's hand
Should die, what fairness to fling that reproach
On me, whose birth-shoots had from father yet
Nor mother issued, who was then unborn ?
Or dawn'd on life woe-mark'd (such dawn was mine),
If with my father then I clash'd, and slew him,
Nought witting what I did, and did on whom,
How couldst with reason blame the unpurposed act ?
Wretch ! and my mother's bed hast thou no shame,
Her own blood-brother thou, to make me speak of ?
Hear how that was : nay, I 'll not hold my peace ;
And thou ramp'd out into this godless tongue !
Mother she was, my mother ;—woe the pain !—
Yet she not knew, nor I ; and, being my mother,
For me gave birth to children, her own shame.
Howbeit, one thing I do know : of free will
On her and me railest thou thus ; but I

Not will-free married her, nor of free-will speak now.
No ; this will never brand my name with scorn,—
This marriage ; nor, what still thou 'ldst crush me with,
My father's murder, heaping bitter taunts.
Answer me, yet, one question, only one.
So careful of the right, say, now, on the spot,
One came and made to kill thee, wouldst enquire,
Was the man your father, or strike back at once ?
Methinks, being fond on life, thou wouldst return
The assailant's stroke, not cast about for warrant.
But I did verily the like stress incur,
Under Heaven's hand : and, were my father's soul
Alive, 't would not, I think, gainsay me here.
But thou—for the right no carer thou, but ready
To say this thing or the other, fair or foul,—
Revilest me before these men like this.
Suits thee to flatter, too, great Theseus' name,
And Athens, what fair order she enjoys.
So full of praise, and all the while forget
How, of all lands that know to pay the gods
Due rites of worship, she herein is first !
Whose suppliant me, grey-hair'd, thou wouldst with stealth
Master, as thou already hast seized the girls.
Wherefore I call now on these goddesses,

With supplication and strong grasp of prayers,
To come with succour to my side, that thou
May'st learn what manner of men this state do guard.

CHO. The stranger, sire, is worthy : and, though his fortunes
Went all to rack, yet they deserve support.

THE. Enough of words. The perpetrators speed,
While we, the sufferers, are standing still.

CRE. What, then, dost bid a helpless creature do ?

THE. Lead the way yonder,—and myself to go
For escort ; that, if in these parts thou hast
The girls we seek, thyself may'st show me where.
If prey in hand they flee, no trouble needs.
Others there are full speed, will never let them
Out of this land escape, and vow Heaven thanks.
Lead on ; and know, captor is captive now,
And Fate hath trapp'd the hunter ; for things got
By tricks that are not right are never safe.
Nor look for friend to back thee ; since I am sure,
Not bare, nor without means thou hast reach'd this pitch
Of now apparent daring insolence :
But confidence somewhere put thee on these deeds.
I must look into this, and never make
This state more impotent than a single man.
Dost catch some meaning here ? or deem'st the present

As idle talk as when thou wert scheming this?

CRE. I will find fault with nothing you say here:

At home, we, 'in our turn, shall know how to act.

THE. Threat now, but go. And, Oedipus, pray, do thou

Stay quietly here, and be assured that I,

Unless I die before, will never rest,

Till I have put thy children in thy hands.

OED. Now fair befall thee for thy nobleness,

Theseus, and thy true forethought toward us!

Exeunt THESEUS and CREON.

✓

CHO.

O now to be yonder, where,

Round wheeling, the foe will soon

Shock closing in brazen War's

Loud clangour,—or by Pythian strand, or

shores of the torch-light!—

Where th' holy Queens tenderly guard dread

rites for men,

Whose mortal lips, their golden key

laid thereto, fast fast have closed yon

Ministrant Eumolpidæ:—there,

deem I, our fire-o'-the-fight,

Theseus, and those young travellers

twain, unhusbanded sisters,—

*Bold hearts shouting round them,—
soon shall meet here in our borders.*

*Or, haply, the leas that lie
West under the Oean crag
Snow-crown'd they will near anon,
Flight-borne on young steeds, borne on cars in
swift emulation.
His fate is seal'd : fearful to face our
people's War ,
And fearful Theseus' folk's right arm !
All the bridle gear is flashing ,
All the knighthood gallops hard, gives
each mouth an easier rein :—
These, who their great Queen honour,
knights' own goddess, Athene ,
Him too, earth-embracing
Ocean-god, dear son of Rhea.*

*Are blows struck yet, or to be ?
Me strange fancy woos,
That I shall soon greet them,
So sorely tried, so sorely treated,
ay, at their own kinsmen's hands.
To-day, to-day Zeus will do something.*

I foresee yon strife's fair issue.

Would,—some wild dove, swift and strong, now,

like the storm-rush,—

Cloud in the heav'ns I might reach, up-

soaring o'er the conflict,

Mine eyes' gaze lifted high a-

bove it!

O God, who all things dost sway,

All see, Zeus! to those,

This land who guard, grant that,

With strength victorious, rich in prey, their

ambuscade they carry through!

And dread thy child, Pallas Athene!—

yea, the hunter-god Apollo,

And his Sister, she the fleet-foot

dappled deer who

Followeth,—fondly I bid these

come, a twofold help for

The good land here and all her

people!

Ha! now, sir wanderer, thou wilt never call

Thy watcher a false prophet: for I see

Yon maids approach again, attended, hither.

OED. Where, where? What 's this? How say'st?

Re-enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE, with THESEUS and attendants.

ANT.

O father, father !

Where is the god might give thee sight of him,
This best of men who hath brought us here to thee ?

OED. My child, are ye here indeed ?

ANT.

Ay, these men's arms,

Theseus' and his kind followers', rescued us.

OED. Come ye to your father, dear, and let him clasp

A form whose advent was beyond all hope.

ANT. Thou ask'st what thou shalt have ; what we give we crave.

OED. Where are ye then ? where ?

ANT.

Here, both of us coming close.

OED. Dear blossoms mine !

ANT.

What finds not fatherhood dear ?

OED. One's props !

ANT.

And match'd, he hapless, hapless they.

OED. Now have I all I love, nor in death now

Were quite unblest, to have had you twain beside me.

Lean both of you, my child, on either side ;

There cling whence ye did spring, and find repose

From this late roaming, so forlorn and sad.

And tell me, briefly as ye may, what pass'd ;

Since for young maids like you few words suffice.

ANT.

Here is our rescuer ; he must tell thee, father,

The deed being his : so my part will be brief.

OED. Sir, do not wonder, if intent I talk

Long with my children, brought to light past hope.

I know, indeed, this dayspring of delight

I have found in them to no one else is due ;

Their full deliverer thou, no mortal else.

And deal the gods with thee after mine heart,

With thee, and with this land : because with you,

As with none other, I have found piety

And fairness and the scorn of lying lips.

I know it, and these words are my return.

For mine is mine through thee, no mortal else.

And reach me out, sire, thy right hand, that I

May grasp it, and, if lawful, kiss thy face.

Yet, what do I say? how should I, sunk so low,

Wish thee to touch a man, with whom no stain

Of ill dwells not? No : I 'll not ask thee, I ;

Nor, indeed, suffer thee. Those long tried therein

Alone can hold this fellowship of woe.

But take my greeting where thou art, and still

Care for me loyally, as thou hast done thus far.

THE. Nor that thou madest some overlength of words,

Joy'd with thy children here, have I been surprised ;

Nor that thou heard'st them first, rather than me :

Nay, I feel no vexation from these things.
For not by words would I do my best to make
My life illustrious, rather by deeds done.
I show it : sworn, I have not been false to thee
In one point, reverend sir : I am here, and bring
The maids alive, unsmirch'd of yonder threats.
And how the fight was won, what need to brag ?
From these, in converse, thou wilt know it all.
There is a matter, has cross'd my path e'en now,
On my way hither, claims thy conference ;
Not much to tell, yet worth the questioning :
And to disdain no fact behoves a man.

OED. What is it, son of Aegeus ? Let me hear :
For I what thou wouldst learn know nothing of.

THE. They say we have had a man, kinsman of thine,
Not of thy city, though, rush somehow on
Poseidon's altar and take seat, where chanced
I was at sacrifice when I had to start.

OED. Where from ? What craving by this suppliant session ?

THE. I know only one thing : with thee, I am told,
He asks some little speech, of no great stress.

OED. But what about ? This suppliance means no trifle.

THE. With thee, they say, to come in talk, nought else.
He asks, and safe depart from his journey here.

OED. Who, who can he be, who claims this sanctuary?

THE. See if at Argos ye have not some kinsman,
Who might, perchance, this favour crave of thee.

OED. O good my friend, hold there.

THE. What is the matter?

OED. Forbear entreaty.

THE. In what direction? say.

OED. I know, when I hear this, who the suppliant is.

THE. And who at all for me to have aught against him?

OED. My son, O king, whom I hate, whom to hear talk
Of all men with most pain I should endure.

THE. How? canst not listen without doing what
Thou dost not choose? How hurts it thee to hear him?

OED. King, 't is a voice his sire hath come to loathe.
Drive me not on constraint, to yield in this.

THE. Yet look, whether the suppliant seat constrains.
I doubt thou must observe the god's regard.

ANT. Father, hear me, though young to give advice.
Let our friend here, at once to his own heart
Do grace, and to the god, as he desires.
Give us way, too, to have our brother come.
Take heart, he will not wrest thee from thy purpose
By aught to thy disadvantage shall be utter'd.
And to hear speak what harm? we know, where deeds

Are foully plann'd, speech plays the informer's part.
Thou gav'st him life ; so, not ev'n when he does thee
The wickedest of foulest wrongs, my father,
For thee is it lawful to do him wrong back.
Nay, let him : other men have bad progeny,
And passionate temper ; yet, being reason'd with,
Through their friends' charms find nature's bent outcharm'd.
Thou on the past, not here, avert thy view,—
Those woes through father and through mother borne.
Ah ! look but there, I ween, thou wilt learn the end
That to ill passion comes, more ill behind.
Matter for thought hast thou, indeed, not small,
Being of thine eyes, those sightless eyes, bereft.
Nay, yield to us : to be urgent is not good,
For those whose cause is just ; nor, to have oneself
Kind treatment, and not know to make return.

OED. Child, 't is a cruel pleasure that your words
Win of me : be it, however, as ye list.
One thing, sir ;—if that man is to come here,
Let none within their power e'er get my life.

THE. Once, reverend sir,—I need not twice to hear
Such things ; and boast I would not, but be sure
Thou 'rt safe, so but some god keep me safe too.

Exit THESEUS.

✓ CHO.

*Whoso craveth the larger lot,
 slack to care for the mean, of life,—
That man shall at my bar be judged
 hugging simplicity, clear convicted.
The long days, let him know, indeed,
 lay up many a store of things,
Ah! far nearer to pain, but where,
 where the joys, thou wilt search in vain,
When once a man hath slid beyond
Due prescription: and the great Helper
Hath but one ending for us,—when lo! 't is ' here, the
 doom of Hades,
With no more lyre, no more dance, no more bride-song,—
Death, even Death, to close all.*

*Ah! not, not to be born, that beats
 all man's reckoning; once appear'd,
Back there, whence he hath come, to go,
 far the best left him is, quick as may be.
For lo! let him have seen but youth,
 fraught with light-hearted follies, pass,
What cares harbour not in? or what
 stroke of trouble remains without?
'Tis Envy, Factions, Quarrel, Fights,*

*Deeds of Blood: and so the lot falls to
The common butt, poor weak Eld, uncompanionable and
friendless,
Last of everything; and every plague's plague
Visits that house and dwells there.*

*Wherein shares yon poor man, not I alone.
As some cape that fronts the north, on all sides,
Lash'd by the waves, buffet of storms endureth,—
So too, this one d'erwhelming,
Awful, breaking like billows,
Woes buffet and batter, and never leave him;
Some from the tracts of the setting sun,
Some from his up-rising,
Some, where his noon-beam he pours,
And some from the North and the Midnight.*

ANT. Lo where, meseems, the stranger hard at hand,—
No company this time, father,—from his eyes
Shedding a flood of tears, comes on towards us !

OED. Who is it ?

ANT. The same man whom all along
We thought ; 't is Polyneices come : he is here.

Enter POLYNEICES.

POL. Ay me ! what shall I do ? mine own woes first,

Children, bewEEP, or, rather, sight of his,
Mine aged father's? Whom in a strange land
Along with you I have found here exiled :
With garb like this too, whose unlovely filth
Aged with the aged hath ta'en up its home,
Pining the frame ; while, on his eye-lorn head,
The locks among the breezes play unkempt.
And, of one parentage, meseems, with these,
His wallet's freight, poor belly's nourishment !
All this, wretch that I am, too late I learn ;
And testify me proved, in care of thee,
Basest of men : what I am none else need tell thee.
But, for with Zeus, in all his works, enthroned,
Mercy for consort sits, let her also, father,
Stand at thy side. The sins are sinn'd : for them
Is remedy, but no more adding thereto.
Why art thou silent ?
Speak, father, something : do not turn from me.
No answer from thee, none ? scornful dismissal
Without a word ? not even explain thy wrath ?
O ye, seed of this man, one blood with mine,
Do ye, at least, essay a father's tongue,
Unaffable and obstinate, to unloose ;
That me, a suppliant of the gods, disdain'd

He let not thus depart, no response made.

ANT. Tell him thyself, poor soul, what need has brought thee.
The throng of words, we know, will, through some joy
They have caused, or grievance urged, or pity express'd,
Strangely the voiceless erst with voice endow.

POL. I will speak out, then ; thou direct'st me well.
First, though, the god's own championship enlisting,
Whence he upraised me yonder to come here,
The sovereign of this country, granting me
To speak, be spoken with, and part in peace.
And this at your hands, sirs, I shall desire,—
My sisters' here, and my father's—to obtain.
But why I came I would now tell thee, father.
Driven from my fathers' land I am made an exile,
Because that on thy throne in full dominion
I claim'd to sit, being the older born.
For this, Eteocles, though by birth the younger,
From the country thrust me, not in argument
Victorious, nor proof come to of hand and deed,
But won the city's ear. And all this I
To thine avenging Fury chief attribute :
Besides, I find seers talk in this strain too.
For, come to Doric Argos, I there won
Adrastus' daughter, and confederates sworn

Made me, of all who in the Apian land
Are first in name and old repute in arms :
So, with their aid, the seven-battalion'd host
'Gainst Thebes to muster, and die in a just cause,
Or rid the land of those who have done these things.
So much for that : why, then, am I come now ?
Why, with appealing prayers to thee, my father,
Mine own and mine allies' : who even now,
Seven lances marshalling seven armed powers,
Jointly beleaguer all the plain of Thebes.
To wit,—spear-hurler Amphiaraüs, he,
First with the spear, first in the tracks of birds :
The second, an Aetolian, Oeneus' son,
Tydeus : and third, Eteoclus, Argive born :
Hippomedon fourth, commission'd by his father,
Talaüs ; while the fifth to the ground (he vaunts),—
Capaneus,—the Theban town will raze with fire.
Sixth, hot from Arcady, Parthenopæus,—
Named of that virgin of old days, brought late
To child-bed,—Atalanta's trusty child.
I thine,—or, if not thine, but sprung the rather
From evil Destiny, thine yet in name,—
Lead the bold troops of Argos unto Thebes.
As 't were these children, or dear self, my father,

We sue to thee, one and all, with strong request,
To let thy heavy wrath give way to him
Before thee, on the march to scourge my brother,
Who hath from native land thrust me despoil'd.
For, if there is aught sure-vouch'd from oracles,
Whom thou shouldst join, those ('t was their word) prevail.
Then, by the founts and gods of kith and kin,
I pray thee hear and yield ; seeing how we stand,—
A beggar I and stranger, stranger thou,
Fawning on other folks to find a home,
Thou and I, both, sharing the self-same doom :
While he in the palace kings it there, ah me !
And laughs at us alike in grand disdain.
But, with thy joint assistance to my purpose,
Small pains or time 't will cost to scatter him.
So will I bring thee home and plant thee there,
And plant myself, him first by force expell'd.
Thus much, if thy will goes with mine, I may
Boast, but without thee cannot ev'n survive.

CHO. For his sake, Oedipus, who sent the man,
Say what is fitting, and then send him back.

OED. Nay, gentlemen, who have this land in charge,
Were 't not that he had sent him to me here,
Theseus, commending him to hear words of me,

Never, be sure, had he caught sound of my voice.
Now, I will favour him ere he goes, ay, tell him
Such things that never will make his life glad.
Ay, villain ! who, when sceptre and throne were thine,
Which now in Thebes thy brother holds for his,
Thine own own father here did'st drive abroad,
And mad'st him alien, and to wear these weeds,
Which now thou weep'st to look on, now thou findest
Thy path in the same stress of woes with mine !
No tears, sir, here : nay, I through life must bear it,
With thee for a murderer in my memory.
For thou didst in this hardship set me living ;
Thou, thrust me out ; of thee it comes, I roam
Begging my daily bread at others' hands.
Well, I begat me these to my nurturers ;
Else, for thy part, surely I had not been.
But now, these keep me, these my nurturers are,
These—no, not women,—men, for helpful service.
You two some other did beget, not I.
Wherefore the eye of Heaven is on thee ; not
As yet 't shall be, if true these powers are moving
Upon Thebes town. For by no means that city
Shalt thou o'erthrow, but fall, ere that day comes,
Blood-guilty, and thy brother in like case.

Such Curses on you twain erewhile I launch'd ;
And summon now to come upon my side,
That ye may learn the reverence due to parents,
And not to outscorn them, because blind the sire,
Who gat such sons as ye. These did not so.
Wherefore, thy 'suppliance' and thy 'throne' thereto
Must bow them, sure as she, reveal'd of old,
Justice, by law primæval, sits with Zeus.
Hence ! whom my gorge rejects, my loins renounce !
Vilest of the vile ! and take these curses with thee,
Which on thy head I call : land of thy race
Neither by spear to win, nor e'er return
To bosom'd Argos, but by kindred hand
Die, and him slay by whom thou wast banished !
So pray I ; and the loath'd Tartarean gloom
Paternal call, to shift thy home elsewhere :
Powers of this place I call ; the Blood-god call,
Who that dire hate betwixt you twain hath flung.
Now, with this audience go ; and when thou comest,
Tell the Cadmeans all, thine own friends too,
Thy staunch confederates tell, how Oedipus
To his own sons such honours hath assign'd.

CHO. Polyneices, in thy journeys past I take
No joy : and now go with thy best speed back.

- POL. Woe for the path I trod, my foil'd emprise !
Woe for my comrades ! Such the journey's end,
From Argos we set out on ! woe is me !
Such as to no one of my comrades may I
So much as speak of, no, nor turn them back :
But holding still my peace, pass to this doom.
Sisters ! his children ! ah yet ye, whereas
Ye hear our sire these hard things imprecate,
Spare in Heaven's name, ah ye two,—should this father's
Curse come to pass, and any home return
Fall out for you,—spare me, at least, dishonour,
But give me burial and the rites thereof.
So to you twain the praise to-day ye win
From this man for your pains bestow'd, no less
Besides shall bring for the service done to me.
- ANT. Polyneices, I beseech thee, hear me a word.
- POL. Dearest, what is it, Antigone ? say on.
- ANT. Turn the host back to Argos, ay, at once ;
And do not self and city, both, destroy.
- POL. Impossible. How another time again
The same host should I lead, when once I had flinch'd ?
- ANT. But what again, lad, needs thy wrath ? what profit
Comes to thee from thy country's overthrow ?
- POL. Shame waits on exile, and on me, the elder,

Thus to be mock'd upon my brother's part.

ANT. Seest then, how strictly thou bear'st out his presage,
Whose voice is for your deaths, at the hands of both?

POL. Because his wish is. But I must not yield.

ANT. Alas for me! But who will dare to follow,
With this man's divination in his ears?

POL. Nay, I'll not bring ill news. The good commander
Will urge the brighter side, never the drawbacks.

ANT. Thus, then, lad, thou art fix'd in this resolve?

POL. Yea; and thou must not stay me. On this path
Engaged am I, so fateful and ill-omen'd
By this our father and his Furies made.
But yours Zeus prosper, as ye that service do me
Dead, for in life ye will have henceforth no power.
Now—loose me: and—farewell! for nevermore
Alive henceforth ye will see me.

ANT. Ah me, me!

POL. Nay, mourn me not.

ANT. And who, bound as thou art
For an open grave, would not bewail thee, brother?

POL. Die, if I must, I shall.

ANT. Nay, dear; hear me.

POL. Let me hear nought that's wrong.

ANT. How hard for me, then,

To bear thy loss !

POL. These things are in Fate's hands,
This way to be, or that. To Heaven for you
Pray therefore I, that ye ne'er come to ill.
Misfortune ye deserve not, the world knows.

Exit POLYNEICES.

CHO. Lo, a new current of new woes, I see,
Full of heavy doom, set from the blind stranger's side !—
'Less, perchance, 't is Fate drawing home.
For no decree of powers divine can
I aver is pass'd in vain.
His eye, his eye Time still keeps on
these ; now ruining out there,
And o' the morrow here a-
gain swelling high.—
Hark, from the sky-vault ! O Zeus !

OED. Children, my children ! would, if handy, someone
Procure me the right noble Theseus hither ?

ANT. Father, but on what claim dost ground thy call ?

OED. This winged thunder of Zeus will presently
Bring me to Hades. Nay, make haste, and send.

CHO. *See you there with what a loud crash it peals*
From the hand of Zeus, ineffable ! Terror creeps

O'er me, ev'n to each hair's extreme.

*I shrink within me. Lo ! again, from
out the sky the lightning flames.*

*What end in store shapes it now ? I
fear : for vainly doth it not
Rush forth ever, nor but
some hap betides.—
O heaven above us ! O Zeus !*

OED. My daughters, on me here life's destined end
Hath come : no turning from it any more.

ANT. How knowest thou ? whence to this conclusion grown ?

OED. Right well I know. But come, with all despatch,
Let one go bring the sovereign of this land.

CHO. *Ha ! see ! yet loud as ever,
all round again,
The deafening hurlyburly !
Spirit divine, be favour-
able, if that thou
Unto the land, our mother,
bring'st aught of gloom :
And show thy righteousness to me, lest,
having look'd on man accurst,
My part, my reward prove*

not gain but loss.

Zeus, Lord, to thee I cry.

OED. Is the man near? Will he, my children, find me
With life yet whole, and mind still unimpair'd?

ANT. And what the pledge thou 'ldst have in the mind take root?

OED. For good done me, the recompense in full,
Which on receipt I promised, would I give him.

CHO. *Ho! thou, my son, be stirring!*
come!—yea, if thou,
In the privacy of the dell,
Adorest Poseidon's
sea-power divine,
Hallowing there his hearth with
slain beasts,—O come!
For worthy thee the stranger deems, thy
builded town, thy people dear,
That he, treated well, make
you due return.
Swift be thy speed, O King!

Re-enter THESEUS.

THE. What noise again makes loud the general throat?
Your voices I heard clear, distinct our friend's.
Thunderbolt of the Almighty was it, or deluge

Of hail burst on you? All things, when God sends
A storm like this, are possible to surmise.

OED. O King, to my desire thou art come : some god
Good hap for thee hath in this journey made.

THE. What is there, son of Laius, new betid?

OED. My life's scale dips ; and, where I have pledged my word
I wish, not false to this realm and thee, to die.

THE. And on what sign of that doom dost thou rest?

OED. The gods, their own self-heralds, bring me tidings,
False at no point i' the tokens foreordain'd.

THE. How say'st thou, reverend sir, these things are shown?

OED. The close continuous thunderings, and the close
Flashing of bolts from the invincible arm.

THE. I trust thee : for I see thou art a prophet
Of much that proves not false. Say what is to do.

OED. I will show, son of Aegeus, what this city
Of thine shall have laid up beyond hurt of age.
Myself will this self hour be guide to the spot,—
Nor take no guiding hand,—where I must die.
And this tell never thou to any man,
Now where 't is hid, nor in what region lies.
So still, 'fore many shields or summon'd spear
Of neighbours, shall the same thy safeguard prove.
But what the ban of reticence debars,

Thyself shalt learn, when thou com'st there alone.
For neither would I any of these thy folk
Should hear it, nor my children, howe'er dear.
But thyself guard it still : and when thy term
Of life thou near'st, to him, thy chiefest, only
Reveal it, and he still instruct his heir.
And thus unscathed this realm thy home shall stand,
Nor fear the seed-sprung men. Thousands of states
Even to the peaceable will soon do despite.
For Heaven's regard, tho' sure, lags late, whene'er
Men scorn its ways, and to fool-frenzy turn.
But, son of Aegeus, choose not thou this fate.
Howbeit, thou know'st such things without my teaching :—
To the place—for urgent is God's hand upon me,—
Let us go now, nor halt thereon no more.
This way, my children ! My turn to lead you,—
A new phenomenon,—as ye once your father.
Set forward : do not touch me ; but let me,
Myself alone, find out the sacred tomb,
Where in this land fate wills this flesh to lie.
Here ! this, this way ! come ! for this way he leads me,
Hermes the Guide, and the abysmal Goddess.
Light without lustre ! mine wast thou once, I trow ;
Now, the last time, my body hath touch of thee.

For now, by this, I pass, my close of life
 To hide with Hades. But thee, best of friends,
 Thee, and this land, and those who call thee lord,
 Good fortune follow ; and in welfare still
 Think of me dead, and prosper evermore.

Exeunt OEDIPUS, his Daughters, THESEUS, and Attendants.

✓ CHO. O, if I may to her,

Goddess unseen, and thee,

proffer devout petition,—

Lord of the souls who dwell in night,

O Aidoneus !—hear my prayer :

That, nor with pain, nor by any doom

sorely lamented, the stranger reach

Yon gloom-wrapt world below, the

field of the dead and the Stygian home !

For, though on him, all for nought,

woes in long procession come,

Again shall God's righteous hand exalt him.

Goddesses throned below !—

hulk of the beast unquell'd !—

who in those guest-frequented

Portals his lair has made, and there

*howls from out his' cavern sends,—
 The savage Guard of the house of Hell :— Cerberus
 so ever runneth the tale :—O grant
 This prayer, thou, Child of Earth and
 Tartarus, that to the stranger he
 Leave passage clear, while his feet
 seek the fields where dwell the dead.—
 Thee, thee I call, Lord 'o th' sleep eternal !*

Enter a MESSENGER.

MES. Sirs ! countrymen ! in straitest compass pack'd,
 My tale were this,—that Oedipus is gone.
 But for the events, not brief can be the story
 To tell, as neither were the deeds there wrought.

CHO. So he is gone, poor soul ?

MES. That he hath quit,
 Yon man, his stretch of life, be well assured.

CHO. Ah ! how ? By some divine, some painless stroke ?

MES. Just there thou hast hit the point which claims our wonder.
 How he moved hence thou, I suppose, being by,
 Well knowest, with no friend to guide his steps,
 But himself for us all leading the way.
 Now when he had reach'd the Threshold's sheer descent,
 With Brazen steps rooted in earth, he there

Halted on one of many-sunder'd ways,
Near the scoop'd basin, where the eternal bonds
Of Theseus and Peirithoüs are uplaid.
Midway between this and the Thoric stone,
The hollow wild-pear and the marble tomb,
He stopp'd and sat down ; undid his foul dress ;
And then, calling his daughters, bade them fetch
Bath and libation water from some spring.
They over against them to Demeter's hill,
Queen of young verdure, went, and to their father
Brought in quick space these errands, and with bath
And raiment made him comely, as use is.
So when to his satisfaction all was done,
And nothing left out now of what he bade,—
Lo ! thunder from the underworld ! The maidens
Heard it, and shudder'd, and at their father's knees
Flung themselves down and wept, and did not cease
To knock the breast, and wail aloud far heard.
He, when he hears the sudden piercing cry,
Folding them in his arms, ' My children,' he said,
' This day ye have no longer any father.
' All my affairs are done for ; nor no more
' For you that painful tendance on my needs :
' Hard, dears, I know ; and yet there is one thing,

‘ One word there is, wipes all these troubles out :
‘ Love—there is no one who has given you more
‘ Than this one here, henceforth bereaved of whom
‘ For all the time to come ye will live your life.’
So, with their arms round one another thrown,
They all wept sobbing. But when they had made
An end of wailing, and no cry rose more,
There was a silence ; and a Voice of One
Suddenly hail’d him, and so frightened all,
As made their hair stand suddenly up with fear.
For many and manifold came the calls divine :
‘ What—ho ! when, Oedipus, when ? Why linger we
‘ To go ? Hath been slackness with thee this while.’
But he, when he perceived him call’d of Heaven,
Speaks to have Theseus come, our lord the king.
And when he was drawn near, ‘ Dear friend,’ said he,
‘ Give me thy hand’s sworn pledge unto my children ;
‘ And, daughters, ye to him : and promise thou
‘ Ne’er to forsake them willingly, but to do
‘ All thy kind thought shall find for their good away.’
And he, like a noble man, refrain’d his ruth,
And gave sworn promise to do this for his friend.
When this was over, straightway Oedipus
Feels with blind hands where his daughters are, and says,

‘ My daughters, ye must brave a noble heart,
‘ And go from here, nor things it were not right
‘ Claim to look on, nor listen to who speak.
‘ Quick, quick ! be moving : only let him, the master,
‘ Theseus, be here, and mark the things that are done.’
To such words gave he utterance, and we heard,
All of us, and with streaming eyes the maids,
And loud lament, accompanied. And, being gone,
In a little while we turn’d, and saw from far—
The man, of him no trace there any more :
But the king by himself, shadowing his eyes
With hand before his face, as had some dread
‘ Terror appear’d, not bearable to behold.
After, however,—a little space, not long,—
We see him worshipping Earth at once and Heaven,
Olympus of the gods, both in one prayer.
What manner of doom cut off that other, none
Of mortal men can tell, save Theseus’ self.
For neither was it fiery thunderbolt
Of Heaven that ended him, nor from the deep
Some hurricano in that hour uproused :
But, or some heavenly escort, or earth’s base
Kind opening on the shades, and with no pain.
For not bemoan’d, nor rack’d with sharp disease,

'The man was usher'd hence, but beyond mortals
Wondrously. And, seem this no sober tale,
I care not to court those misdoubt me sane.

CHO. Where are the maids, and their escort of friends?

MES. They are not far : voices of lamentation
Not indistinct give sign of their approach.

Re-enter ANTIGONE and ISMENE.

ANT. *O woe, woe ! ah ! 't is ours, 't is ours, now,
Not here and there to bewail our unhappiness,
The curse from father's blood in us engender'd ;—
Father,—for whom otherwhile so unflinchingly
Bore we that long trouble, now at the last to be charged
with these mysteries
Of things endured and look'd on !*

CHO. *How is 't, then ?*

ANT. *Ah ! that we can but guess, my friends.*

CHO. *Gone is he ?*

ANT. *E'en such wise as thou wouldst most desire.
For, look ye, him met nor War,
Face to face, nor gulph of waters ;
But—the fields invisible snatch'd him
By a mysterious decease spirited hence.
Ah me ! but death-like o'er our eyes*

CHO. *Say, what wise?*

ANT. *Where his wish it was, in foreign land,
He hath found death ; now he lies
Low in darkling bed for ever.
Dry-cheek'd sorrow, not such he left us :
Witness these eyes, father, of mine, brimming with tears,
In mourning thee ! Nay, nought wot I,
How—ah me !—I yet might learn to
 dissipate this great grief for thee.
Woe 's me ! wish to die in
 foreign land was thine, but so,
In dying, thou wert forlorn, for me !*

ISM. *Woe is me ! what, then, is this destiny,
 me anew * **
** * * * * **
*Awaits, both me and thee, love, thus,
 thus of our father orphan'd ?*

CHO. *Nay, but, dear hearts, since he so richly
 hath finish'd off his close of life,
Cease ye from this lament ; for none '
 'scapes from the toils of evil.*

ANT. *O love, with haste return we.*

ISM. *What in mind to do ?*

ANT. *Eagerly I long to*

ISM. *To ?*

ANT. *Look upon the earthy resting-place*

ISM. *Of whom ?*

ANT. *Of father. Woe is me !*

ISM. *But this in nowise may be : nay,*

Seest thou not ?

ANT. *Why do you thus chide me ?*

ISM. *Ay, and how*

ANT. *There is something more, then ?*

ISM. *Pass'd he unsepulchred and without witness ?*

ANT. *Have me away, and then slay me also.*

ISM. *Ah ! ah !*

Woe is me ! O where, where

Spend shall I, so helpless-desolate,

Henceforth my dreary life-time ?

CHO. *Dear maids, let nought alarm you.*

ANT. *Ah ! yet where to flee ?*

CHO. *Long there hath been refuge for*

ANT. *For ?*

CHO. *Your fortunes, that they fall not ill.*

ANT. *I know.*

CHO. *Then, what hast here in mind ?*

- ANT. *How homeward we shall win our way,
Wot I not.*
- CHO. *Nay, and do not seek it.*
- ANT. *Trouble doth press.*
- CHO. *Yea, hath been oppressive.*
- ANT. *Now indeed hopelessness, now again, past that.*
- CHO. *Ah what a sea thereof hath been your portion !*
- ANT. *Woe ! woe !
What way lies our path, Zeus ?
Nay, for unto what last relic of
Hope now doth Fortune urge me ?*

Re-enter THESEUS.

- THE. Cease lamentation, maidens ; for, where we
From the Grave have secured joint loving-kindness,
We may not mourn : there's a judgment.
- ANT. O son of Aegeus, fall we before thee.
- THE. What request, my girls, with suit to obtain ?
- ANT. Our wish is to look with our own own eyes
On the tomb of our sire.
- THE. But that may not be.
- ANT. How sayest thou, king, sovereign of Athens ?
- THE. My children, a charge I received from him,
No one to suffer that spot to approach,

Nor invocation let any mortal
Address to the sacred tomb, where he lies.
And this, said he, I, accomplishing well,
The land should hold ever uninjured.
This, then, from my lips Heav'n heard, heard God's
Oath-witness, who hearkeneth all things.

ANT. Well, well : if to him it is pleasing so,
That shall suffice us. But thou to Thebes,
World-old, let us have convoy, if haply
We may stay that bloodshed, whose present approach
Threatens our brethren.

THE. Not this only, but all things will I do,
Whate'er my hand findeth to help you,
Or him in the grave, newly departed,
Pleasure ; nor dare think it a burthen.

CHO. Come, make an end of your dirge, and no further
Raise ye the coronach :
For surely these things are establish'd.

